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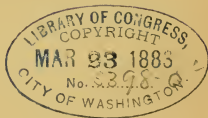
ANGELINE.

ANGELINE.

A POEM.

BY

GEORGE H. CALVERT.



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ANGELINE.



I.

'T WAS not an old-faced castle, with a moat,
Drawbridge, and court portcullised, turreted,
With look defiant still, as though its throat
Would like to blow of feudal war a dread
Awakening blast, to summon from their bed
Knight and retainer, battle-axe and shield
Snatched hastily, with heavy falchion, red
With neighbor's blood, who fell, not in the field
But treacherously slain, unarmed and unaneled.

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II.

Imagination, roused by that fierce blast,
Scales joyously the castle's lofty wall,
To scan rude trappings of a distant past
And pace the flags of hospitable hall,
And penetrate unhindered into all
Chambers, even to where beauty's heart beats,
Waked by the blast : — but this is not my call.
Read *Agnes Eve*, by that divine boy, Keats,
Hardly surpassed in his supreme poetic feats.

III.

It was a modern mansion, with long wings,
Its shaven lawns enlivened by the light
Of flowers, and moving shade which the sun flings
From wind-shook trees. Towards the south the sight
Ranged over lowland pastures, where a bright
Irregular little lake broad shadows caught
From oaks, spared from the forest, left and right,
As though they had been planted with Art's thought,
Which easily achieved the park-effects it sought.

IV.

The house, within, was roomy, firm, well-lighted,
With skill proportioned, lofty in the ceiling,
Bordered by cornices that the eye delighted,
The chief rooms looking to the south, revealing
The planner's hygienic thought, and feeling
For nature's benefactions. Pictures, few
But genuine, arrayed the walls. Appealing
To beauty, they the looker's vision drew,
Holding and teaching him with sound sensations new.

V.

The day we enter 't is a house of mourning :
A corpse lay confined in the drawing-room ;
Its head had ended here his long sojourning.
The air was darkened, to compress the gloom
That men have hung round death, as though a doom
Were death. To die is to be emancipated.
A nest of upflown fledgeling is each tomb.
The man 's not buried there : he is translated
To fleshless spheres, whence earthly pains are relegated.

VI.

Besides that for clear light was dimness, the air
Was further loaded by a silence deep
That weighed upon the crowd, assembled there
To look on face that lay now in cold sleep.
That last sad look might well in tears ensteep
The looker. Those were features whence had shone
Good will on all. For this he now would reap
Joys lasting, peace: we, on earth-joyance prone,
Hardly can we believe such heavenly blisses won.

VII.

The craped, black-robéd children, one by one,
Approached the bier, to kiss that forehead cold.
Silence broke into sounds of sobbing tone
From all the daughters, save the one least old ;
And she was neither heartless, hard, nor bold.
On her was stampt something empyreal fine,
The favorite darling of a cherished fold,
The youngest in a healthy brood of nine,
The rapt-eyed, contemplative, tender Angeline.

VIII.

Like beckoning hope beside a still despair,
Or streak celestial through a threatening cloud,
Tall Angeline gleamed on that heavy air.
As she came near, without a tear, she bowed
Her comely head to where, within its shroud,
That loved face lay. Her curls caressed — as they
Had often done — the features, and more loud
The sisters sobbed : she lifted from the clay
Her brow, and with both hands upraised, as she would
pray,

IX.

Her visionary eyes upturned to heaven,
With lips apart, as in a whisper slight,
Or as to help her ears they had been riven,
Her springy form all clad in purest white,
Her face in th' ecstasy of spiritual sight,
With an unearthly look upward she gazed,
Not at the dark ceiling, but into light, —
Filling her full of joy and new amaze, —
That folded father, mother, in celestial blaze.

X.

She seemed a Heaven-commissioned messenger,
To whom 't is given, into the world unseen, —
That world that ever needs interpreter, —
To catch glimpses, resplendent with a sheen
For earthly vision, — save when that has been
Purgéd in spiritual fire, — too dazzling clear.
Her large eyes shone with gaze sublimely keen,
Her figure lithe seemed strained to rise more near,
As though 't was not of earth, and soared above the
bier.

XI.

“There, there they are!” She spoke with bated
breath,
Whisper that all could hear. With mingled awe
And wonder did they hear. “There is no death!
I see them, father, mother! never saw
Them so distinct. O! read this lifting law:
They live! they live! There, side by side they
stand!
No pain can reach them, and no worm can gnaw.
What a new joy in father’s face, as bland
He smiles on mother! There! they vanish hand in
hand!”

XII.

Erect, with arms upyearning, robed in white,
She shone, amid the mourning gloom around,
Like splendent Truth, in unacknowledged might,
Amid the shows and falsehoods that confound
Man with his own devices, which abound
Like juggling mists on a projected shore,
Where fog-bell beats its doleful, saving sound.
But in that mourning crowd were two or more
Who felt the virtue of her bright inspiring lore.

XIII.

The youngest brother shared some of her gift.
The venerable pastor, through whose beard
Twinkled his lips as through a snowy rift,
Was not astonished, nor was he afeard
At this eccentric speech, with hands upreared.
Religious was he, one who trusted less
Himself than God, whose feelings were not seared
By worldliness, much readier to confess
His own than others' faults, averse with words to bless.

XIV.

He had dug deeply in this oreful mine,
Seeking to solve the mighty mystery ;
And furthered he had been by Angeline.
His faith was mastering in humanity :
He felt man's kinship unto Deity.
Angeline he had known from babyhood ;
And on no thought or thing firmer stood he
Than that upon the stream of her heart's blood
No lie could float, in her true soul no untruth brood.

XV.

From history he learnt that chosen minds,
With varying gifts, are envoys God-empowered
To loosen floods of thought upon the rinds
Of custom, grown so sapless that it soured,
No longer sweetened, human doing, dowered
To rise, and eagerly towards Heaven aspire.
Provisionally is man in time embowered,
But with a soul and faculties afire
With hopes, imaginations, ever glancing higher.

XVI.

The pastor was as humble as clear-sighted,
Clear-sighted from a genuine humbleness.
By self-esteeming thought is somewhat blighted
In spiritual things, in the material less, —
Nay, not at all. Strong self-regard will press
A disinterested motion down to where
Its individuality can caress
It to conform it with what self can dare,
Or will deny it worthy of a guardian's care.

XVII.

The pastor's mind kept open to the truth.
And new truths are the levers that upswung
Mankind upon its human track. In youth
Custom's conventions tyrannous had hung
Weights on his mental enterprise, and flung
Him far aside from paths that were his own.
But when ripe years were come, and truth had sung
Her spheral tones, and life's illusions flown,
He had waxed freer and into firmer wisdom grown.

XVIII.

To him, with this high nature, Angeline
Had been, at first a wonder, then a wise
Instructor, fresh indued with sapience fine ;
Finer than earthly thought can recognize,
Until its spiritual sense has taught it prize
The subtle deeps of its own glorious being, —
Deeps where 't is plumed with wings of light, to rise
Towards heights from whence it gains a new far-see-
ing,
And apprehends with joy fuller divine decreeing.

XIX.

When Angeline was aged only four
The pastor had been summoned to explain
A startling strange demeanor, that had sore
Perplexed her parents, would have given pain,
Had it not been so childish true : insane,
At first, it almost looked. With her twin-sister —
Whose body two months in the tomb had lain —
She seemed to play and talk ; then she would list
her,
As though 't was Eve was speaking ; then would archly
whisper.

XX.

“Why dost thou play so long at make-believe,
Dear Lina?” said her mother. “Nay,” she cried,
With quick surprise, “I play and talk with Eve.”
“She is not here,” the mother soft replied;
“I see her not.” “Thou seest her not!” with wide,
Strange-staring eyes. “There! mother, she has
leapt
Into your very lap, swift from my side:
’T is Eve herself, alive, whom we have wept:
An angel now: she did not die, she only slept.”

XXI.

The pastor's wonder deepened into awe.

Suffer little children to come unto me,

Of such is the kingdom of Heaven. He saw

The depth of these great words, th' immensity

Of meaning in them, which can only be

Seized by a spiritual grasp ; and this he had

Through native aspiration, purity.

She, Angeline, she was an angel glad

To him, braced with the strongest sanity, not mad.

XXII.

With trembling tenderness he questioned her.
It was a blessed vision, to behold
This aged man, this honored priest, defer
With reverence to a little girl, and mould
His thinking by her artless words, and fold
Into his soul her speech and look, divine
Revealings of a blessedness untold,
The flashing down from Heaven a helpful line,—
And all this through the four-year gentle Angeline.

XXIII.

At first, that she could see what he could not
Was almost vexing to the earnest child.

But soon, through gifts it was her halcyon lot
To wield, both he and her dear mother mild
Had glimpses by her side of th' undefiled
Lost Eve, with more than mother's joy refound.
For little one astray the joy is wild

When 't is brought home ; but here a deeper wound
Than few weeks' loss is healed, with heavenly balsam
bound.

XXIV.

Eve, lost a child of earth, a child of Heaven
Is found. Great good is that, yet not the best.
By an angelic touch, a sacred leven,
The mother's being is lifted, hallowed, blest.
The finding of her Eve as cherub drest
Brought Heaven into her heart as ne'er like this,
Even to her, of virtue's gold possest.
To see her cherub child ! to touch, to kiss !
And thus to know she lives ! — for mother true what
bliss !

XXV.

“Heaven lies about us in our infancy.”

Heaven lies about us in all times and places.

Never a moment rests th' activity

Of God, in all the worlds, in all the spaces,

Evolving out of deepest spiritual bases

Creation and progression infinite.

In this evolving, limitless the graces,

Beauties, while free are moulded mountain, mite,

And life and love bestowed on behemoth and sprite.

XXVI.

Where life and love are, Heaven can be, must be.
Perverted life can darken into mate
Of Hell, of Hell on earth, Hell we can see
And feel. Hell's not a place, it is a state.
And so is Heaven, which Love doth aye create,
Great Love, of Life divinest minister,
So puissant he can mould decrees of Fate,
So noble, pure, his own life is a stir
Of ceaseless giving, giving aye, to him, to her.

XXVII.

'T is love divine that kindles love in man ;
And were not man a spirit, he could not hold
This sacred fire, more bright ethereal than
The light, more potent than the sun, more bold
Than whirlwind, livelier than stars unrolled
Through all the spaces of infinitude.
Lifted by this deep glow, man mounts, — through
cold
Obstructions of the flesh with death imbued, —
To where nor tyranny nor age can e'er intrude.

XXVIII.

Thence, through high love divine, and love humane,
The spirit man, unfleshed, revisits earth ;
The disenthralled, who hath in prison lain,
To comfort prisoners, comes to the dear hearth,
His first loved home, the cradle of his birth.
In Time the sun maintains the body's eye
With missives of beneficence : more worth,
The seeing, feeling soul, shall it not be
Nourished by spiritual rays out of Eternity ?

XXIX.

Only through watchful openmindedness
Can purposes and will of Mind Supreme
Be traced, — power and love supreme, no less.
What feelings, thoughts, imaginations, beam
Upon us, with a tender, awful gleam,
At vivid presentation of these words !
We feel enfolded in a holy dream ;
Our consciousness is tuneful with accords
Which nor the will nor understanding's range affords.

XXX.

The unseen grown visible ! what exaltation !
Our daily air alive with beings reborn !
Future life present ! what a revelation !
Earth's night illumed by a celestial morn !
Spirit triumphant over flesh outworn !
Enfranchised spirit back to earth returned,
To enlighten, gladden, doubting man forlorn.
The cherubs are no fabled lights unburned :
Sure th' immortality for which man aye hath yearned.

XXXI.

'Twixt th' unseen and the seen a child the link !
Auroral herald of transcendent day,
The little Angeline stood on the brink
Of this immensity, mindless — as May
Of her fresh, boundless bloom — of the bright way
She threw wide open to mankind misled,
Of shallow leaders, sages false, the prey.
Angeline's leader was an angel bred,
Wisest of sages, on rich spiritual manna fed.

XXXII.

Mysterious union ! miracle sublime !
Angel and man in one ! body and soul
Close coupled by copartnership in Time,
To bear fruit ever ripening, as unroll
The cycles of Eternity ! A goal
Aye fleeing, with a brightened sheen, to higher
And wider spheres, displaying vivid scroll
Ever more brightly inscribed with holy fire,
And hearing richer voices from th' angelic choir.

XXXIII.

Continuous betterment, what an existence !
From babyhood to loftiest angelhood
On road bloom-fragrant through unending distance !
Each carrying in his brain the fitting food
For healthy full fruition of the mood
Created by each phase of bettered being :
Interminable progress from one good
To more refined beatitudes of seeing,
The soul's unfoldment more and more with God agreeing.

XXXIV.

This Heaven that has been, is, and is to be,
In swinging mankind to a higher brink, —
Whence brighter glimpses into th' eternity
Of beautiful life. — In this new lift a link
In the vast chain of causes, without kink,
Was little Angeline, the darling pet
Of a dear earthly home. He who can think,
Purely and free, of this great fact will get
Feelings will leave his eyes with grateful joyance wet.

XXXV.

The lost all found, the dead alive, the breath
That fills our lungs, with spiritual nurture quick,
To feed our souls, bright multitudes whom death
Has freed and brightened, hovering round us, sick
Imprisoned earthlings, not as round a wick
Deluded moths, but like th' electric flame
That circumfuses earth with fire, to prick
Dull atmospheres. These dear departed aim
To make us more alive to our celestial claim.

XXXVI.

And Angeline was a selected tool
For this beneficence, a spirit-glass
Through which we earthlings catch (and school
Ourselves thereby) sight of what comes to pass
Beyond the tomb, — a sight that in it has
Regeneration. Through the affections flash
Sure warrants of a mighty truth, which was
Before but half-belief, — broad proofs, that dash
Doubts to the wind, and the hard skeptic's soul abash.

XXXVII.

As Angeline blossomed towards womanhood
The expansion of her heart and intellect
Made her great gift glisten into a good
Whose magnitude a child could not detect, —
Good which through her clear soul could not come
flecked
With dark obtrusions. From her mother's glad-
ness —
An earnest gladness, whole, without defect —
She learnt that what could so transmute such sadness
Had in it a deep, cheering virtue, and no badness.

XXXVIII.

And as her brain and faculties unfolded
She found herself a brightened centre new
Of weeping circles, for whose hearts were moulded,
Through her great gift, a quickening solace, true
As frost-constricted furrow ever drew
From vernal sunshine. She became a link
'Twixt earth and Heaven, so strong that she could
strew

Balm on the stricken, rescuing from the brink
Mourners, under their load of love about to sink.

XXXIX.

When gifted Angeline had touched fifteen
Her gentle mother passed to higher spheres.
Clearly as by her transcéd eye was seen
The spiritual body as it surely steers
Its upward flight towards smiling spirit-peers
Visibly awaiting her, there was a pang
That pierced her frame, and one swift flood of tears,
As on the body, whence no longer clang
Life's long-loved tune, she gazed, and felt as hostile
fang

XL.

Had roughly robbed her. 'T was but for a moment :
She quickly righted from this blast of grief.
She rose above that which alone could foment
Such tears, — thought of the self. This is the thief
That steals life's jewels. She a quick relief
Found, thinking of her mother's lifted state,
Which through her gift she learned ; for now, belief
Was changed to blazing truth, as at the gate
Of those blest spheres, where troubles cease and boils
no hate,

XLI.

Uplooking from the body natural to
The body spiritual, she transfigured saw
Her precious mother ; and her eyes could go
From dead to living face, from face which gnaw
Already quick corruptions, thence with awe
Delightfully sublime, to face fresh glorified
With life imperishable, where the deep law
Of being resplendently may be espied,
The which nor doubts, nor sophistries, nor thoughts can
hide, —

XLII.

The law, the sacred and beneficent,
That matter is to spirit subordinate.
Gross matter only by its being blent
With spirit is enlivened, and its rate
Of life is measured by its spirit-mate.
When, through successive marriages with mud,
Spirit has wrought it to its purest state,
Then, by divinest spring of growth, the blood
Flows of humanity, and in its spirit-swollen flood

XLIII.

The beautiful, majestic, noble frame
Is shaped, that walks creative on the earth.
And when this finely kneaded clay the flame
Of spirit can no longer serve, rebirth
Uplifts the man above a mortal hearth
To finer fact on higher planes, where he,
No longer circumbound by fleshly girth,
Is launched fresh forth, from earth-conditions free,
Into new life, upon a shoreless spiritual sea.

XLIV.

Into new life, out of a seeming death,
Life soaring into possibilities
Boundless, which lavish hope illumineth.
A song from angel-choirs doth hush the cries
Of anxious, doubting man, and through new ties —
Tied by great Love with liveliest spiritual hands —
Turns promises of Faith to Truth, that plies
The thought through palpable illumined bands,
Summoned, not by the wave of poets' potent wands,

XLV.

With their prophetic wise imaginings,
But by the supervisive, love-born Might
That fledged the human brain with spirit-wings
To waft us through death's darkness towards a light
So holy pure 't would blast an earthly sight.
'Twixt the two human worlds, th' unseen and seen,
Stood Angeline, with heaven-willed power, the night
That blackens death to dissipate with sheen
Of God-lit fact, — fact, of man's world the abiding
Queen.

XLVI.

She stood as one atiptoe on the earth,
Updrawn, her face doubly illuminated,
By her own soul, forefeeling its rebirth,
And souls already towards their heaven translated,
Pouring upon her love-lit looks, dilated
With spiritual light, with light divine ablow,
The light by Love supremest consecrated,
Whose gladdening beams creative ceaseless flow,
Flooding the Universe with Beauty's sacred glow.





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